

NEWS FROM THE CORNUCOPIA INSTITUTE

WINTER 2013

USDA Power Grab

National Organic Program Guts Synthetic Materials Decision-Making Process

BY WILL FANTLE

he USDA's National Organic Program (NOP) stands accused of a power grab due to changing a fundamental decision-making process impacting organic food and agriculture. Miles McEvoy, the NOP's Deputy Administrator, announced a dramatic change on September 13 to the process for approving the continued use of certain non-organic and synthetic materials in organics.

Non-organic and synthetic materials are banned from use in organics, but limited exceptions are allowed and itemized in federal organic regulations in what's called the "National List." Every five years each item approved for use receives a technical reevaluation to determine if continued use of the material threatens human health or the environment and if an organic-produced alternative is viable. This is known as the *sunset* process for if a material is not reapproved, its use in organic food and agriculture ends.

"The use of synthetic substances in organic production and processing is an exception, not an entitlement," notes Jim Riddle, a respected former chair of the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB). The NOSB was created by Congress in the Organic Foods Production Act to advise the USDA Secretary on policies impacting the organic industry and to



When no one was looking, USDA Organic Program administrators dramatically changed how additives are reapproved for use in organic food. They sought no public comment — not even input from the National Organic Standards Board mandated to advise them.

specifically oversee and carefully review for approval any synthetic and non-organic material and ingredient used in organic farming and food production.

The NOSB was supposed to be composed of various organic stakeholders with a minority of its members representing corporate agribusiness; other members come from the farm community, environmental, scientific and public interest organizations. And in an attempt to push the oversight of the industry towards consensus, the federal regulations require a two-thirds majority for "decisive" votes on such matters as approving a synthetic material for use in POWER GRAB continued on page 8

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The Corporate Takeover of the Seed Industry

EDITORIAL BY PAMELA COLEMAN, PhD

eeds are the foundation for producing most of the food we eat. Traditionally, farmers and gardeners knew that saving seeds from locally adapted crops was essential to ensure a productive harvest and adequate food for the next year. Today, many farmers are legally prevented from saving the seeds from their own crops, grown on their own land, because corporations patented the seeds and require purchasers to sign an agreement that they will not save seeds for replanting.

Preventing farmers from saving seeds forces them to buy new seeds each year — a boon for the seed companies. Ideally, competition among seed companies would keep prices affordable. In recent years, though, seed prices have risen dramatically, far outstripping the pace of inflation. Consolidation has severely limited the farmers' and gardeners' options for purchasing seed.

The seed industry today is an oligopoly dominated by the chemical companies Monsanto, DuPont, Syngenta, Bayer, Dow, and BASF, plus three independent seed com-

To learn more about this issue, turn to "GE Crops: Why Scientists Are Worried" (page 6) and read the profile of certified organic regional seed company Fruition Seeds (page 11).



The concentration of power in the hands of a few transnational corporations is not compatible with the practices and principles of sustainable agriculture. panies. Chemical companies develop patented herbicideresistant seeds, and require farmers to use their brands of herbicide to produce those patented crops. This puts farmers on a treadmill, needing to purchase expensive inputs each year.

The agricultural treadmill, according to Michigan State University food systems professor Philip Howard, occurs when farmers purchase off-farm inputs in order to increase production. Initially, those farmers benefit from the increased production, and increased sales. As other farmers adopt the

technologies, the increased supply causes a decreased price for the crops. The result is that farmers must constantly increase yields to maintain the same revenue. Reliance

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Inside I-522

The Story Behind Washington's GMO Vote

BY JASON COLE

B y the time you read this, the results of the GMO food labeling vote in Washington State will be known. At press time, the day after the election, Initiative 522 was failing 45% to 55%. The campaign over I-522 was the costliest initiative fight in Washington history, drawing millions of dollars from out of state. This snapshot captures the big news in the campaign's closing days, including the unmasking of the food and beverage companies that financed the NO side to the tune of \$11 million.

Early polling showed two-thirds of voters favored the measure, but a barrage of TV and radio spots financed by opponents narrowed the gap.

The opposition outspent supporters about 3 to 1 — \$22 million to \$7 million. The amount broke all records in Washington State for spending to oppose a ballot initiative. Remarkably, the NO funds came almost entirely from six contributors: Monsanto, Du-Pont Pioneer, Dow Chemical, Bayer CropScience, BASF Plant Science, and the Grocery Manufacturers Association. Only \$550 of it came from state residents.

One of these contributors was not like the others: the Grocery Manufacturers Association (GMA) is not a company, but a trade lobby group that represents the food and beverage industry. Initially absent from the donor list were the food and beverage companies that poured money into a similar GMO labeling initiative in California, Proposition 37, which was narrowly defeated in 2012.

To make sense of what went on in the campaign, we turned to Trudy Bialic, director of public affairs at PCC Natural Markets, co-chair of the YES on 522 campaign steering committee, and a 20-year veteran of the natural/ organic grocery business.

"GMA members, such as Coca-Cola, Pepsi Co., ConAgra, Nestle and General Mills, spent tens of millions of dollars in the fight against Proposition 37 and found themselves the target of boycotts for their opposition to labeling," Bialic explained. "To avoid a repeat in Washington, these companies decided to use their trade lobby group as a front for financing the anti-labeling side."

Opponents — biotech and junk food companies — outspent supporters 3 to 1, \$22 million to \$7 million. A paltry \$550 of NO on 522 donations came from Washington State residents.

Unfortunately for them, such tactics put them in violation of Washington's political disclosure laws. A lawsuit brought against the GMA by a pro-labeling group, Moms for Labeling, was thrown out of court due to a technicality. But when Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson filed suit to bring GMA in accordance with state law, the group admitted defeat and released the names of its members that bankrolled the antilabeling effort. Not surprisingly, it was the same companies who spent millions to defeat Proposition 37 in California — some of which own prominent organic brands.

According to Bialic, to the GMA and their membership, transparency in the food system is simply anathema. "We've been through this before," said Bialic. "The food and beverage industry is making the same arguments in opposition to GMO labeling that it made 20 years ago when it

One Co-op's Response

M any foundational organic brands, such as Cascadian Farms, Muir Glen and Kashi.

are now owned by the large food and beverage companies behind the anti-labeling campaign. Bialic says PCC Natural Markets, the largest cooperative grocer in the U.S., has struggled for years about how to balance the



Trudy Bialic, PCC's public affairs director and YES on 522 co-chair

needs of its customers.

"To what extent is PCC or any food co-op responsible for educating the consumer? Or are consumers responsible for their own education?" she asks. "At PCC we are working on a comprehensive signage program, but the range of information consumers are interested in – nutritional, allergenic, environmental, ethical and so forth – can quickly become overwhelming."

Some PCC member-owners have called for the co-op to drop brands owned by companies that contribute to the anti-labeling cause. Bialic says PCC has pledged to label GMO foods in their stores by 2018. In response to member requests, the co-op is also considering how to provide transparency in what companies own what brands. Shoppers can now download Philip Howard's "Who Owns Organic?" chart from the co-op's website.

Adds Bialic: "We realize that providing such information should be part of a larger discussion about product attributes, which are the most important to track, and how we might coordinate them in a package we can manage and update over time."

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CSA in the USA: The Next Quarter Century

Is the "C" in Community Supported Agriculture Slipping?

BY STEVEN MCFADDEN

B y now we have well over 8,500 CSA farms in the USA, according to national databases. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is serving hundreds of thousands of families in urban and suburban communities, and also in some rural locales. Many thousands more such community farms are at work in Canada and globally, weaving people together with the land and their food.

Yet across the U.S., many rural regions are "food deserts" where production ag reigns supreme, and fresh local food and supermarkets are scarce. In this context, CSAs in general (and also collaborative CSAs, a.k.a. cCSAs, and CSAs in partnership with co-ops) have potential to meet many profound needs.

But before CSA will make a significant, rural impact, the movement will need to reckon with a paradox: many With competition from other CSAs and now aggregators, farmers say sustaining membership is one of the most difficult aspects of running a CSA.

farmers and shareholders identify *community* as a weak part of CSA. They say it's just not happening as theorized.

In their article "Farming Alone? What's Up with the 'C' in Community Supported Agriculture?" scholars Antoinette Pole and Margaret Gray tell of how they learned through an extensive survey that few people say they consciously join CSA to build community or meet like-minded people. The majority say they sign up for the fresh, local, organic produce.

Anthropologists Cynthia Abbott Cone and Ann Kakaliouras set out a contrasting view in their equally thoughtful paper, "CSA: Building Moral Community." Identifying CSA as a social movement, the authors observe that many participants express their commitment in moral terms, and see themselves as nurturing soil, family and the larger community.

Beyond paradox, there is a revealing reality: many CSAs have dismal renewal rates. A study undertaken with LocalHarvest, the nation's leading online directory of organic and local food, reported that sustaining membership is one of the most difficult aspects of running a CSA. In many areas of the country, the public has a number of CSA options, including aggregators, which may eschew community to follow a "business model." Aggregators source products from several farms to sell to buyers; some advertise themselves as CSAs.

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"Putting a Farmer's Face on Food"

Although globally CSA has several roots, one model comes from Japan, where amidst concerns regarding the decreasing access to locally grown food, women consumers approached farmers to grow crops specifically and personally for them in order to ensure food safety and security. This concept is called *teikei*, meaning "putting a farmer's face on food."

In the mutually beneficial arrangement of CSA, consumers share the risk of production by paying farmers at the beginning of the season and sharing the successes and failures of the season. Subscriber members typically receive a weekly portion of the farm's bounty during the growing season. They share an interest in the farm that is more than just financial, but social as well. While the nature of the interaction varies from farm to farm, CSA provides an alternative model to conventional agriculture today precisely *because* it unites community formation and local food production.

KAYANN SHORT and her partner, John Martin, have run the thriving Stonebridge Farm CSA near Lyons, Colorado, since 1992. The first CSA in Boulder County, it narrowly missed September's devastating floods. Short's new book, *A Bushel's Worth: An Ecobiography*, is a memoir of reunion with her grandparents' farming past through CSA and a call to preserve local farmland today (abushelsworth.com). *Photo: Bartering members, who exchange labor for their weekly share of vegetables, harvest fall leeks*.

My Road to Organics

Cedar Summit Farm Third-Generation Dairy

Do you remember what sparked your decision to farm organically? Or to switch from heavily processed food to fresh, local, organic fare? Perhaps it was illness. Or concern for the environment and animal welfare. Maybe you wanted to protect your children's health. Each of us has an aha! moment or moments. In this issue, Cornucopia board member Dave Minar tells how he came to farm organically at his family's 100% grassfed dairy in Minnesota.

y organic story best begins with my entrepreneurial ancestors: a grandfather who was able to buy farms for all three of his sons and was a master craftsman who built his own retirement home in town, and then built a home for his daughter and son-in-law. His new home had a large root cellar that was filled with potatoes that were grown on his youngest son's farm every fall. Although crippled by arthritis, Grandfather's potato business was a major source of his retirement income and was a way for him to be connected to his community, as almost everyone in our town came to buy his potatoes.

My father, who was his oldest child, was very fond of horses and started a stud horse business with a beautiful Percheron stallion. I still have his logbook where he described all the mares that were serviced with the date and the owner. Inheriting some carpentry skills, he proceeded to build his own barn from a huge wind-fallen tree. Of course, Grandpa was there to supervise. When new technology come to agriculture in the late '30s, my father purchased a new wire tied hay baler and was hired by many local farmers to bale the wind-blown straw from around their straw piles.

After WWII the munitions plants in this country were converted to pesticide manufacturing. Dad was one of the first in our community to adopt their use in controlling weeds and insects.

My wife Florence and I purchased the farm from my parents in 1969. Having been trained in all the new technologies at the University of Minnesota, we easily adopted their use on our farm.

Three of our children were born in the late '60s and we wondered what effect the use of pesticides could have on them. Every spring we would see dead birds on our newly planted corn fields, no doubt from eating some of the treated seed that was left on the surface after planting. We began questioning the use of pesticides on our farm.

The watershed moment came in the spring of 1974. I had been spraying a cornfield with an herbicide that came as a wettable powder and was plugging the nozzles of the



Dave and Florence Minar were named MOSES Farmers of the Year in 2007.

sprayer. With bare hands I was cleaning the nozzles, when I was overcome by a neurologic reaction. I had to lie down for several hours and wait for the effects to subside. We sold the sprayer that summer and swore that we would never use pesticides again.

We gradually learned the organic-farming techniques of our forefathers, mostly by trial and error. In the '70s about the only information that was available was from the Rodale Institute. Today, the information exchange is readily available at sustainable farming associations and organic farming conferences.

We learned that corn needed to be planted after mid-May when the soil was warm enough for rapid germination and the farmer had a chance to till the field to destroy emerging

After WWII the munitions plants were converted to pesticide manufacturing. Dad was one of the first in our community to adopt their use in controlling weeds and insects.

weeds. Corn needed to be planted in a field that was in sod the previous year to get the maximum weed suppression. Use of a spike tooth harrow seven days after planting corn was a good way to control early weeds. We relearned the use of a rotary hoe and a cultivator.

During the drought of 1988–89 we came to realize that we were doing the right thing as most of the neighborhood corn was dry and shriveled, and ours was lush and green. We were improving soil organic matter and water holding capacity by farming organically.

DAVE MINAR's grandfather purchased what is now Cedar Summit Farm in 1926. One of Minnesota's leading dairy providers, Cedar Summit sells products to over 75 retail locations and at the on-farm creamery. Dave and Florence have 5 children and 12 grandchildren. All of them regularly visit or work at the farm.

GE Crops: Why Scientists Are Worried

Novel DNA Spreads into the Environment, Livestock and Humans

BY PAMELA COLEMAN, PhD

he food in grocery stores today is unlike the food eaten by our ancestors, even a few hundred years ago. Part of the difference is easy access to highly processed foods, refined sugar, and chemical preservatives. A more significant difference is the high percentage of genetically engineered (GE) crops that are the source for our food. The corporations who developed this technology tell us that it's safe, so why are independent scientists worried?

There are many reasons for concern. The GE crops are created by using a new genetic process to insert an unknown amount of DNA that has the potential to spread in the environment in unpredictable ways. Independent research on the effects of eating these new foods has been suppressed when it shows evidence that the genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are harmful to health.

Novel Genetics

Traditionally, humans have bred new varieties of plants by transferring pollen between two plants of the same type, for example, from one corn plant to another. This mimics the exchange of DNA (genetic material, or genes) that occurs naturally without human intervention, and the resulting plants contain only plant DNA.

Genetic engineering is fundamentally different, because it uses microorganisms (typically a bacterium) to transfer DNA and insert it into the DNA of the plant. The new DNA contains the desired gene (such as herbicide resistance), plus a gene for antibiotic resistance, plus an unknown amount of bacterial DNA with unknown functions. The process is not at all precise, partly because



the process causes mutations in the plant's DNA, and partly because even a single change in the plant DNA can give rise to multiple changes other than the one intended.

Spread of Engineered DNA

In 2012, GE crops were planted worldwide, on 25 million acres of land. After GE DNA is released into the environment through the planting of a GE crop, the DNA can spread through the environment to plants, fungi, bacteria, and animals in ways that are difficult to predict and impossible to control.

It is well known that GE DNA can spread from plant to plant, through the transfer of pollen from a GE crop to a non-GE plant, a process called cross-pollination. For example, GE corn can contaminate non-GE corn, and GE sugar beets can contaminate organic spinach, because they are closely related. This is a huge concern among seed producers and organic farmers, because the seeds of the cross-pollinated crops, and all their offspring, are contaminated by the GE DNA. When GE canola transferred its glyphosate-tolerance genes to wild mustard, this new DNA was able to persist in the weed populaAfter the planting of a GE crop, genetically engineered DNA can spread through the environment to plants, fungi, bacteria and animals in ways that are difficult to predict and impossible to control.

tions for six years. (Glyphosate is the active ingredient in Monsanto's Roundup herbicide.)

Less well known is the transfer of GE DNA from plants to bacteria. In the soil environment, the GE DNA can persist in the soil for at least a year, where it can be taken up by natural soil bacteria and be incorporated into their genomes. This spread would not be detected in the initial field tests of GE crops, because it is rare, and scientists were not specifically looking at this type of environmental contamination. As GE crops become widespread and are planted repeatedly for many years, the likelihood increases that GE DNA will spread to soil bacteria.

GE DNA can also be transferred to the bacteria that inhabit the human

Babies and children are more vulnerable to the health risks of GMOs than adults. Stay tuned for Cornucopia's new report, Protecting Children's Health: Choosing Organic Foods to Avoid GMOs and Agricultural Chemicals.



digestive system. After volunteers ate just one meal of GE soy, bacteria in their digestive systems contained the DNA from the GE soy foods.

The GE DNA has not only been found in the bacteria, it can also be transferred directly into animals. When livestock were fed GE crops, the GE DNA was taken up by the animal's organs and detected in the meat, milk, and fish that people eat.

Questionable Research

The uncontrollable spread of GE DNA is a huge issue, because of the limited information on the long-term health effects of these novel crops.

Biotech companies claim that GE crops have been well researched, but independent scientists dispute that claim. Industry studies have been conducted by the corporations themselves, without review by independent scientists, and the data may not be available for public access.

This process is very different from the accepted scientific standard, where results are first reviewed by peers (knowledgeable scientists who did not conduct the study) before they are published.

The studies that are available are often inadequate. Feeding studies are conducted on laboratory animals for only a short period of time — often 30 to 90 days. Food that does no detectable harm in 90 days may be quite harmful when eaten over the decades of a human lifespan! Long-term studies are not required by regulators anywhere in the world.

Independent scientists who have conducted longer-term feeding studies over the lifespan of the lab rats, typically two years, have raised serious concerns about the health effects of GE crops. Even over this shorter time period, scientists reported harm to the liver, kidneys, digestive and immune systems, as well as other health problems.

Industry response has been to

discredit these independent scientists, rather than to support peer-reviewed research. Monsanto discourages farmers from research, by requiring them to sign a "Stewardship Agreement" that states: "Grower may not conduct research on Grower's crop produced from Seed other than to make agronomic comparisons and conduct yield testing for Grower's own use."

In 2009, 26 scientists were so concerned about the suppression of research on GE crops that they made a formal complaint to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. They wrote, "No truly independent research can be legally conducted on many critical questions involving these crops." Said one scientist: "If a company can control the research that appears in the public domain, they can reduce the potential negatives that can come out of any research."

What We Can Do

Millions of acres of genetically engineered crops have been planted and incorporated into our foods, with little understanding of their health effects. This has opened a Pandora's box, as the unique bacterial genes have spread to other plants, bacteria, and After volunteers ate just one meal of GE soy, bacteria in their digestive systems contained the DNA from the GE soy foods.

animals. Independent scientists are being prevented from testing the raw ingredients in our nation's food supply, even as more and more acres are being planted to these untested crops. Meanwhile, the corporations that tell us biotech crops are safe can reap huge profits from the sale of GE seeds.

Many consumers are employing the Precautionary Principle — avoiding GE foods as much as possible until research proves they are safe. The best option continues to be certified organic food or purchasing directly from farmers who provide information about their crops.

This article with footnotes is available at www.cornucopia.org. Related articles in this issue: "The Corporate Takeover of Seed" (page 2) and "Saving Seed," a profile of a regional organic seed company (page 11).

Global Scientists: GMO Safety Not Proven



More than 230 international scientists, academics and physicians have signed a public pronouncement, initially released October 21, stating there is no scientific consensus on the safety of genetically modified foods and crops, despite such claims by GMO proponents.

One of the signors is geneticist Belinda Martineau, a former member of the University of California–Davis Genome Center who helped commercialize the world's first GE whole food, the Flavr Savr tomato. Said Dr. Martineau: "Society's debate over how best to utilize the powerful technology of

genetic engineering is clearly not over. For its supporters to assume it is, is little more than wishful thinking."

The scientists' complete statement is available at www.cornucopia.org.

USDA POWER GRAB

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organics. This process is designed to ensure that wide agreement supports the use of the material in organic food and agriculture.

McEvoy's recent memo, issued without any public discussion or debate, has arbitrarily changed the rules of the game. Instead of requiring a sunset material to win a two-thirds vote allowing continued use in organics, it would now require a two-thirds vote *to remove* a material from use. The change was justified as a way to "streamline" the sunset process.

"The USDA has turned the entire sunset process on its head," says Barry Flamm, a former NOSB chairman and chair of the Board's policy development subcommittee for four years. "Instead of needing a super-majority of the Board every five years to continue using a synthetic in organics, the NOP has, without the legally required consultation with the NOSB, published an edict in the Federal Register requiring a two-thirds vote to instead remove a material," Flamm added.

Many of the materials on the National List are not controversial. For example, hydrogen peroxide, livestock vaccines, and Vitamins B, C and E are allowed synthetics. Dairy cultures and yeast are allowed non-synthetics. Celery powder and pectin are examples of agricultural materials unavailable in organic form. In many cases, specific restrictions (annotations) are attached to these materials further defining and limiting their specific uses.

However, a number of materials are controversial and have caused heated debate at recent NOSB meetings. Carrageenan, narrowly reapproved for use by the NOSB in 2012, is a synthetic food additive that Cornucopia, along with other public interest organizations, has been extremely critical of due to its known inflammatory impact on the digestive system.

Large food manufacturers, with support from their powerful lobbyist the Organic Trade Association (OTA), are also increasingly petitioning the NOSB for the addition of more and

Another NOP "Oversight"

The USDA's National Organic Program (NOP) management has been ignoring NOSB decisions on other matters as well. One recent example again involves carrageenan, a common food additive known to cause digestive inflammation. When the Board granted its relisting as an allowed substance, they stipulated with an annotation



that it could not be used in infant formula. Infant digestive systems, as most people know, cannot tolerate solids in the first few months of life. Carrageenan acts as a binder and coagulator in formula, which has led to its prohibition in infant formula by the European Union. When the NOP issued formal rules for its use, they ignored the NOSB's restrictions.

A shopper's guide to avoiding carrageenan in organic and non-organic foods is available at www.cornucopia.org, along with the report *Carrageenan: How a "Natural" Food Additive is Making Us Sick*.

more gimmicky nutraceuticals for use in organic foods. DHA was an intensely contested material that the corporate-dominated NOSB narrowly approved in 2011.

"The USDA has turned the entire sunset process on its head." —Barry Flamm, former NOSB Chair

Following the DHA fight, The Cornucopia Institute began a careful review of the history of the materials approval process and published a report entitled The Organic Watergate. Cornucopia documented a corrupt relationship between USDA officials and giant agribusinesses that had invested in organics. The report exposed the existence of biased technical reviews of synthetic materials considered by the NOSB and the stacking of the Board with agribusiness executives in seats that Congress reserved for farmers, scientists and other independent stakeholders.

"We focused sunlight on the fraud and deception in the process," observes Mark Kastel, Cornucopia's Codirector. "The result was a turnaround at the NOSB, which has acted more judiciously in preventing some synthetics from entering the organic production stream."

The NOSB, since the release of *The Organic Watergate*, has denied petitions for several synthetic preservatives proposed for use in infant formula, rejected unnecessary additives like sugar beet fiber (likely made from GMOs), and voted to discontinue the use of tetracycline, an antibiotic used to control fireblight on apples and pears, because of concerns regarding human health and environmental impact.

"The OTA and its members (White-Wave, Kellogg's, Smuckers, Safeway, etc.) have seemingly lost control over the process at the National Organic Standards Board," adds Kastel.

That loss of control, and the tipping point that may have pushed the USDA into changing the materials



Longtime OTA member Jim Riddle, a former NOSB Chair, publicly resigned from the trade group over its support of the NOP's change to the sunset policy. approval process, could very well have been the NOSB's failure last spring to reapprove continued use of the sunsetted antibiotic tetracycline in apple and pear production. Even though a majority of the Board favored keeping tetracycline on the National List, the decisive vote could not win the required twothirds majority.

Industry representatives were stunned by the outcome. They have, however, been very supportive of the change in decision making by the NOP. Melody Meyer, the newly elected board chair of the OTA and the Vice President of Policy and Industry Relations for United Natural Foods, Inc., wrote a blog post entitled "Stop the lies and get behind your National Organic Program." In the post, she charged that concerns raised over the process change by public interest groups were "lies" and "bogus." Meyer instead applauded the "gusto and vigor the program [NOP] delivers to our growing industry."

Meyer's comments followed the release of a joint statement from several Cornucopia allies, including Beyond Pesticides, Consumers Union, Food and Water Watch, and Center for Food Safety, challenging the reversal Large food manufacturers, with support from the Organic Trade Association, are increasingly petitioning the NOSB for the addition of more and more questionable additives for use in organics.

in organic governance. The Organic Consumers Association has also been circulating a petition condemning the procedural change.

Jay Feldman, the Executive Director of Beyond Pesticides and a current member of the NOSB, says any change to the decision making process "should have been subject to public review." He expresses a concern that instead of "driving the Board to consensus" as Congress intended on materials allowed for use in organics, members of the organic food community may "start to view the organic label as undermined."

The OTA's perspective proved too much for longtime member Jim Riddle. In a two-page open letter Riddle announced he could not, in good conscience, renew his membership. Riddle wrote that "Ms. Meyer displayed an alarming lack of understanding of the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA) and the National Organic Program (NOP) Final Rule, as well as disrespect for public interest groups who have been part of the organic movement from the beginning."

Cornucopia and other organizations concerned with organic integrity are examining their options. "We may very well end up in a court battle over this latest abuse," says Kastel.

"The stakeholders who truly care about the integrity of the organic label, and the principles it was founded upon, are not going away," affirms Kevin Engelbert, a certified organic dairy farmer from New York, Cornucopia board member, and former NOSB member. @

SEED INDUSTRY

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Find Philip Howard's infographics about the seed and organic industries at www.cornucopia.org.

on purchased seeds, pesticides, and synthetic fertilizers forces farmers to spend increasing amounts of money to operate their farms, even when farm revenues decline.

As farmers purchase expensive inputs each year, the result is increased profit for chemical / seed companies (and lenders), which has allowed them to purchase smaller companies and eliminate competition. The concentration of power in the hands of a few transnational corporations is not compatible with the practices and principles of sustainable agriculture.

Howard recommends specific changes to our food system: enforcement of antitrust laws, ending the practice of granting patents on living organisms, and creating alternatives to oligopoly seed production, such as sustainable agriculture.

Howard admits that these changes will not be easy: "Increasing the opportunities for renewable agriculture requires reversing these trends, but such a reversal is unlikely unless major political and economic changes are enacted."

CSA

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In analyzing data from the 850 farms in the LocalHarvest study, researchers identified two things that CSA farmers can do to remedy membership turnover: host special events on the farm and consciously build personal relationships with members. But that's asking a lot of farmers and their families: to grow the food and also to grow the community around it.

That's why the CSA core group concept — a group of committed volunteers who serve and advise the farm — has been key in helping many CSAs sustain themselves. No doubt core groups could also play a crucial role in helping CSAs reckon with the FDA's impending and ill-conceived Food Safety Modernization Act, which seems designed to ensnare small, organic farms in red tape and added expense.

As CSA pioneers conceived of it 28 growing seasons ago — and as it is still being practiced at many community farms — CSA is not just another clever approach to marketing. Rather, community farming is about the necessary cultivation of earth-renewing agriculture through its healthy link"For whatever reason, whether it's the economy or the availability of oil, or how crops are grown and where, people will very likely be turning to their neighbors for a network of support. That's where CSA stands right now as a wise response."

-Erin Barnett, LocalHarvest

age with the human community that depends on farming for survival. It's also about the necessary stewardship of soil, plants and animals: the essential capital of human cultures.

If the ideals are kept in mind over the next quarter century and community does engage, then in addition to all it has already accomplished in our cities and suburbs, CSA can continue to metamorphose and do far more, and also make an emphatically healthy difference in rural America.

STEVEN MCFADDEN is co-author with Trauger Groh of the first two books on CSA: *Farms of Tomorrow* (1990) and *Farms of Tomorrow Revisited* (1997). His blog is www.thecalloftheland.com.

Welcome: It's a Cornucopian!



Cornucopia's newest member is the infant daughter of our social media maven, Jill Ettinger. Imogene Anaïs Novic was born September 15 to Jill and her partner, Baza Novic. The couple live in Los Angeles. Imogene, pictured here with Mom in the family's fertile garden, is thriving. Congratulations to the whole organic family!

I-522

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opposed ingredient and nutrition labeling. They said then that food labeling would be the death knell for their business. Of course that hasn't been the case. And not only are they fighting GMO labeling, they opposed country-of-origin labeling as well," she explained.

Cornucopia Board member Goldie Caughlan is a Seattle resident who recently retired after 30 years as PCC Natural Markets' consumer advocate and nutrition educator. The co-op was a major contributor to the YES campaign, along with Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps, I-522's largest donor, and Dr. Joseph Mercola, the largest personal contributor. "A win in Washington would likely be followed by numerous states asserting the rights of their consumers," Caughlan



said. "And it would serve to make it likely that strong national standards would be mandated and enforced as should have been required from the time GMO seeds were first introduced," she added.

As for the future of GMO labeling in Washington and the rest of the

country, says Bialic, "Whatever the outcome of the November 5 vote, the labeling train has left the station and it is only a matter of time before we see it happen nationwide."

In a continually updated **INFOGRAPHIC**, Cornucopia tracked the organic heroes funding the YES campaign and the corporations on the NO side, many of them with organic interests. View the infographic at www.cornucopia.org.



THE CORNUCOPIA FARMER PROFILE

n the blink of the past 50 years, chemical corporations have come to control over 50% of the global seed supply. It's a sharp departure from human history: farmers and individuals had saved local seeds for 14,000 years.

"There is a global systemic crisis in how our seeds are selected, bred, owned and distributed," say the co-founders of Fruition Seeds, Petra Page-Mann and Matthew Goldfarb.

Part of a growing movement to relocalize — and reclaim stewardship of — seed production, Fruition Seeds in Upstate New York provides over 100 varieties of certified organic veg-

etable, grain, herb and flower seeds to Northeast farmers and backyard growers.

Other signs also point to the need for this work. The world has lost 75% of the genetic diversity in food crops in a mere century. As crop diversity diminishes, food crops go extinct, and plants lose the ability to adapt to climate change, pests and disease. Genetic patenting of seed (both GMO and hybrid) prevents many farmers from even saving their own seed, and GE pollen drift contaminates non-GMO and organic crops.

When Petra and Matthew met in 2011, it took "about 30 seconds" for them to discover their mutual passion for seeds, says Petra, a native of the Finger Lakes region that is now home to Fruition Seeds. The couple launched the company in 2012, but its roots go back decades.

Petra, 29, saved seeds as a little girl, fascinated by the cycle of life she watched unfold in her father's garden. She started farming 10 years ago, focusing on small diversified organic farms, and has worked for seed companies on both coasts, including a multinational seed company. Matthew, 37, has designed and managed diversified farms, consulted for farms and farm-education groups, done ag research at Cornell, and taught high school biology and agriculture. He has an MBA from Babson College.

Today, most seed is conventionally produced in just a



Saving Seed



Matthew Goldfarb and Petra Page-Mann

few places, such as Israel and the U.S. Pacific Northwest, for global distribution. It is "good enough" but not necessarily adapted to the environmental pressures a specific region faces.

"It's important that we produce seed [regionally] because whether you're breeding or just growing out, you're making a choice about what genetics get passed on," Matthew explains. Take, for example, their new red fire lettuce seed crop. Of the 1,200 or so lettuce seeds planted in April, after hundreds of them were "rogued out" (thinned) at various stages of transplant and

maturation in the field, only 80 plants remained. "This is stock quality seed," Matthew explains, "and we're distributing it as commercial seed for everyone."

Adds Petra: "Resilient genetics is the heart of a resilient food system." That's what Fruition Seeds is all about. With seed saving instructions in every packet and DIY video tutorials on the website, the company eschews both the typical American business model that seeks to crush the competition and the corporate restriction of seed ownership. "The work we're ultimately trying to do is develop regional seed for the Northeast that can deal with climate change and other pressures," Matthew explains. "This is a regionwide effort, from the backyard grower to the seed company to the chef to the eater," he says.

Toward this end, other regional organic growers partner with Fruition Seeds, mutually buying and selling surplus seed to augment each other's markets. A few large-scale organic farmers are collaborating with Fruition Seeds to develop new varieties. The win-win arrangement gives the seed company the opportunity to do large-scale breeding over several years without the high cost (typically \$250,000 to develop a new seed variety) while the farmers get highly specialized seed for their farms and their markets.

Fruition Seeds is just finishing its first growing season. Response from Northeast growers has been phenomenal, says Petra. "Where the local food movement was 20 years ago, local seed production is now," she explains.

No surprise, with organic making up less than 1% of the seed industry, "there is a huge gap in demand for organic seed," says Matthew. In fact, small-scale seed companies like Fruition Seeds are growing by 50% each year, sprouting quickly to save our seeds.

-ELIZABETH WOLF



You Keep Cornucopia Independent



Many nonprofits rely on foundation grants for the majority of their income. In happy contrast, the largest part of Cornucopia's support comes from individual donations. In fact, the past two years members have contributed nearly 50% of the annual budget.

While our foundation, co-op and business supporters are extremely important to us, we – and they – thank you, our 9,000+ members nationwide, for keeping Cornucopia strong and independent. This organic "truth squad" depends on it. Your gift this season will protect the good food movement in 2014. Thank you! P.O. Box 126 Cornucopia, WI 54827

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Organic Acreage Rebounding?

A ccording to USDA data, organic cropland and pasture dipped between 2008 and 2010 as sluggish growth in consumer demand during the recession dampened the short-term outlook for organic producers. However, according to a recent USDA report, the growth in organic acreage has recovered those losses and reestablished its upward trajectory.

Yet certified organic cropland makes up only a minute fraction of the U.S. total, roughly 0.7 percent. Only a tiny percentage of the top U.S. field crops—corn (0.3 percent), soybeans (0.2 percent), and wheat (0.6 percent)—are currently grown under certified organic farming systems. Faring a bit better are organic vegetables (6 percent of U.S. vegetable acreage) and organic fruits and nuts (4 percent).

"The earlier reporting of loss of certified organic farmland, and farmers, is consistent with anecdotal reports from farmer-owned cooperatives that their members were exiting organics due to the inability to compete with cheap foreign imported commodities and industrial-scale livestock factories," said Mark A. Kastel, Cornucopia's Senior Farm Policy Analyst. "The loss of federal cost sharing for certification in many states, and massive increases in organic imports, has also likely contributed to the reduction in certified organic operations," Kastel added.

The USDA's report also found that, while households economized on food purchases during the recession, growth in consumer demand for organic products rebounded quickly afterward. Produce (fruits and vegetables) and dairy are still the top two organic food categories, accounting for 43 and 15 percent of total organic sales in 2012. "Since organic sales didn't actually decline in the soft economy, rather the growth curve flattened out, this illustrates how much imports from China and other countries have cut into the promise for family-scale farmers here in the U.S.," Kastel explained.